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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 000379

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TAGS: [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [PREL](#) [GOI](#) [EXTERNAL](#) [ISRAELI](#) [PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS](#)

SUBJECT: FM DEFENDS BREAK WITH PA, DENOUNCES IRAN AND SYRIA
BEFORE DIP CORPS

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: At a political/diplomatic briefing for foreign ambassadors, Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom defended Prime Minister Sharon's decision to suspend contacts with the Palestinian Authority until the PA takes action against terrorist infrastructure in the territories. Shalom said that Abu Mazen had the capability to stop attacks on Israelis, but questioned the new PA President's will to do so. Shalom stated that Israel was willing to make painful concessions but would not negotiate while under attack. He said that Israel was willing to return to September 2000 positions and follow the roadmap, but the PA had to fulfill its Phase I commitments. He claimed complicity of PA security forces in the recent attack at the Karni Crossing. Shalom denounced Syria for hosting Hizballah and Islamic Jihad, and called for concrete goodwill gestures by Syrian President Assad. He asked the assembled envoys to urge a complete cessation of Iran's nuclear program. The FM praised the broad support for this month's special UN session commemorating the liberation of the concentration camps, and asked for senior representation at commemorations at Yad Vashem in March. End Summary.

Israeli - Palestinian Relations

2. (C) At a briefing for foreign ambassadors at the MFA January 17, FM Shalom defended Prime Minister Sharon's decision to suspend contacts with PA officials following the January 13 attack at Karni. He said that Prime Minister Sharon was committed to disengagement, but not under fire. Israel was willing to coordinate on disengagement and incitement whenever the PA was willing to oppose terrorism. Israel went along with burial of Arafat in Ramallah rather than in Gaza, and had cooperated with the PA and international observers on the recent elections. Abu Mazen had a very clear mandate and the time for excuses was coming to an end.

"Abu Mazen has the capability -- but does he have the will?"

3. (C) Shalom said that despite doubts to the contrary, PA President Abu Mazen possessed the capability to crack down on Palestinian terrorists. He questioned whether Abu Mazen had the will to do so. Israel was very unhappy with Abu Mazen's campaign statements and believed "he means what he said." "Arafat made a very extreme speech at the White House in 1993 at the time of the Oslo Accords and never moved an inch from what he said." Israel could not accept statements like "Israel is the Zionist enemy." Abandoning terrorism is a Phase I commitment under the roadmap. Abu Mazen had said that Qassams and the Intifada were against the interests of the Palestinians -- but he didn't say that they were wrong. The terrorists were not just hurting Israelis; they were hurting Palestinians too. Shalom asked his audience of ambassadors to urge the PA to fully implement Phase I of the roadmap. That meant rooting out the infrastructure of terrorism, not just a ceasefire. It also required a range of reforms, including civil, budgetary and security, and reduction of the number of security structures to three from "14 or 20." Israel was in favor of the London Conference as a means to assist the PA in meeting its Phase I commitments. Shalom called for the countries represented to help rebuild Gaza and the West Bank, noting that he had asked the Japanese Foreign Minister to reestablish the committee on the environment to address related infrastructure, sewage and water issues.

Comments on Resettlement, Arab World

4. (C) Shalom asked that other countries assist Palestinian refugees. He said that some wanted to move the Palestinian Diaspora to Israel rather than to their own country. "They must have other intentions; no one will accept it." He asked his audience to ask Arab countries to assist the refugees, and mentioned some of Israel's recent efforts to intensify consultations with Egypt and Jordan. He noted a "change in the Arab world," with Saddam and Arafat gone, and Qaddafi showing a change in attitude. Only the threats of Iran and Al-Qaeda were left, he said.

No "Two Tracks of Terrorism and Talks"

15. (C) Prime Minister Sharon had declared that there would be no talks until Israel saw concrete actions by the PA. Israel could not accept two tracks of "terrorism and talks." It needed the Palestinians to show that the era of Arafat is over. Israel could not accept daily missile attacks. Sderot had lost seven people in recent weeks. PM Sharon had a new and more stable coalition and a huge majority in the Cabinet in favor of the disengagement plan. It was time to show the world that the Palestinians were able to take over. Terrorists could not fire missiles from the West Bank because Israeli forces had been there since 2002. The recent attack at the Karni Crossing could not have taken place without the assistance of PA security forces, Shalom claimed, because the terrorists could not have moved kilos of bomb material through the crossing gate without assistance. He called 2005 a "year of hope" for disengagement and PA reforms, and said that if those processes succeeded it would be possible to move to implementation of the roadmap. Because of the Intifada, there was no confidence and trust. As the sides disagreed on all final status issues, it was impossible to jump right to negotiations. Depending on the PA's actions, Israel was willing to withdraw to September 2000 positions.

Terrorism "Not Just Israel's Problem"

16. (C) Elaborating on the subject of terrorism, Shalom said the world had come to understand that terrorism was not just Israel's problem. He then stated that "all those committing terrorist acts are Muslims, but most Muslims are moderates and want better relations with the West and Israel." (Note: In the later question and answer period, the Egyptian charge took issue with Shalom's characterization of all terrorists as Muslims. End note). He characterized Al-Qaeda, Islamic Jihad, Hizballah and Hamas as extremists driven by the idea that Islam should rule the world. Israel was working to improve its relations with the Muslim world and trying to isolate such extremists.

Comments on Iran and Syria

17. (C) Shalom said it was especially important to recognize the role of Iran and Syria in supporting terrorism. He called Iran "the enemy of all of us" and said Iran was behind 25 percent of the attacks against Israel. Although Israel had been able to prevent 22 attacks by Hizballah, Hizballah had carried out 64 successful attacks and was increasing its efforts since Arafat's passing. (Note: Shalom did not give a time frame for these figures. End Note). Countries shouldn't try to distinguish between Hizballah's political and armed efforts, Shalom said, asking "Do you know a party with 12,000 missiles, a party that carries out attacks against civilians?" He urged all countries represented at the briefing to include Hizballah in their lists of terrorist organizations. He said there were fewer attacks by Hamas due to cutoffs of funds, and funds to Hizballah needed to be cut as well.

FM Calls for Iran to Cease All Nuclear Development

18. (C) Turning to Iran's "development of a nuclear bomb," Shalom said that the international community was talking about using carrots and sticks, but he saw "only carrots." He said Iran would never abandon efforts to develop a nuclear bomb. Any "suspension" of efforts was by definition temporary, and the UNSC should address the problem if Iran was unwilling to fully halt its nuclear development program. The FM said that some of the countries represented at the briefing had their own intelligence on Iran's efforts, and Israel had provided its intelligence to other countries. He concluded his remarks on Iran by saying, "Before, Iran was Israel's problem, but now Paris, Berlin, London and the south of Russia are within range of the missiles Iran is developing."

Syria: President Asad Needs to Match Words with Deeds

19. (C) Shalom said not only was Syria hosting the headquarters of Hizballah and Islamic Jihad, but missiles from Iran intended for attacks against Israel were transiting Damascus and the port of Latakia. President Asad had been saying he wanted better relations with Israel, but "there was a big gap between words and deeds." Asad was now facing pressure from the U.S. and the UN Security Council. The 1976 occupation should come to an end. Lebanon could have been the second Arab country with diplomatic relations with Israel, but Syria had blocked that possibility. Syria should make concrete gestures towards Israel, including returning the remains of Israeli spy Eli Cohen and providing information on an Israeli soldier who had disappeared near

the Syrian border.

Ambassadors Ask Israel to Give Abu Mazen Time

10. (C) The ambassadors or charges from the Netherlands, South Africa, Egypt and the Czech Republic spoke during the question and answer period. The Dutch representative asked whether Israel's unwillingness to withdraw from Gaza under fire wasn't giving a veto to the terrorists. Shalom replied that Abu Mazen and the leaders of his security forces could stop attacks "in a moment." They needed to move against the terrorist infrastructure as Arafat had done in 1996 when pressured. The South African ambassador suggested that suspending talks weakened "the elements for peace." Shalom replied that Israel was willing to make "very painful concessions" for the sake of peace, and Abu Mazen would actually be strengthened by moving against perpetrators of terror. The Egyptian charge' took issue with Shalom's statement that all terrorists are Muslims. Shalom replied with a restatement of Israel's efforts to engage with the Arab World, and noted that there were mosque sermons in Gaza that called Jews "animals" and worse. He said that Israel was simply asking Abu Mazen for "best efforts." In response to a question from the Czech representative about actions Israel could take, Shalom said that Israel had quietly removed over 100 illegal outposts and repeated that Israel was prepared to withdraw to September 2000 positions following steps on security by the PA. (Note: GOI data contradict Shalom's claim on outpost removals. Data show only 29 outposts removed since early 2003; the total number of outposts has gone from 146 in 2003 to 117 today. End Note). He said that without PA action against terrorist infrastructure, "every aircraft" taking off from Ben Gurion Airport could be targeted if Israel withdrew from the West Bank prematurely. In closing remarks, the Dean of the Corps praised Israel's support for the recent elections and asked that Israel continue to support Abu Mazen as the leader of the Palestinians.

Atmospherics: Foreign COMs Deputized as Israeli Ambassadors

11. (C) Shalom began his remarks by asking his audience of COM's to "be Ambassadors of Israel," saying they and their families recognized the reality of terrorist attacks in Israel. He expressed his condolences to the families of Tsunami victims, noting that Israel had been trying to assist

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within its limited resources. Shalom thanked those countries that supported the UN special session to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps scheduled for January 24. He asked the ambassadors to urge high-level representation from their countries at the special session and at March commemorations at Yad Vashem in Israel. He said that anti-Semitism was still flourishing in Europe, but praised France and other European governments for their recent efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

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